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Noisi of the Dvenos Inscription

(From a note read before Am. Inst. of Arch.,
Dec., 1901)

The word NOISI of the DVENOS inscription has caused no slight difficulty. In his "Historische Grammatik," page 213, Stolz gives the problem up, or rather pushes it to one side, with the words "Von NOISI der DVENOS-inschrift will ich wegen des unsicherheit der deutung nicht sprechen."

And Lindsay says of NOISI in his "Latin Inscriptions," page 20, "The formation of NOISI is doubtful, but the sense of *nisi* is, rightly or wrongly, usually given to it." And in the same book, page 22, he adds: "NOISI is difficult to explain. The true precursor of Classical *nisi* would be *nesei*." Again, in his "Latin Language," page 611, Lindsay says: "In that very old Latin inscription, known as the DVENOS inscription, we find the Negative in another Locative form, *noi*" ("Is this," Lindsay asks, "a mere graphic form of *nei*?"), "if," he adds, "NOISI is rightly interpreted as 'unless.'" In his "Latin Inscriptions" Lindsay gives, in his Classical Latin version, *nisi* for NOISI. Egbert, in his more complete treatment of the varying views, cites (Egbert: "Latin Inscriptions," page 347) Dressel, Buecheler, Osthoff and Jordan as agreeing upon *nisi*, and gives Bréal only as holding a different view.

The doubt which both Lindsay and Stolz express or indicate, and which Egbert details, as to the interpretation of the DVENOS inscription it is not my purpose in this brief note to enter upon further than to indicate what seems to me a possible method of explaining the word NOISI.

1 If we assume that the theory is correct which would derive the word *non* from a

compound of *ne* and *oinom*, of which an intermediate form would then be the *noenu* of Lucretius III 199:—

In that case, before reaching the spelling *noin*, it must at one stage have been *noin*. Compare old FOIDERATEI with Classical *foederati*. Now if that *noin* were compounded with *sei* the resultant would regularly give NOISI. This then would not be "a precursor of Classical *nisi*," but a compound of an early form of *non* and *si*.

2 If one finds unsatisfactory the common derivation of *non* from *ne* and *oinom*, holding that this would lead to *nun*¹ as in *nullus* from *ne oinolos*, and prefers to operate from an Umbrian byform *no* to get his *Non*, the combination of *noin* and *sei* is still explicable in this way, and obviates the necessity of setting up an hypothetical Umbrian locative byform *noi*, to which he otherwise seems driven with Lindsay. At any rate the possibility of the view that NOISI derives from *ne* (or *no*), and *oinom* and *sei* seems indicated by the form NOINE, locative of classical *nonus* from *novenos*, from which we have also *nundinæ*.

Edgar S Shumway

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¹See Stolz, H. G., Pp 130, 131.

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